

Emergency Responder



WASHINGTON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION

WASHINGTON MILITARY DEPARTMENT

November - December 2003

Washington awarded homeland security funds

Washington was awarded more than \$60 million in new federal counter-terrorism and urban area security grants in November

Counter-Terrorism grant

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced a fiscal year 2004 counter-terrorism grant award of \$44.2 million for Washington.

This grant consists of three components: State Homeland Security Program, \$33.6 million; Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program, \$9.9 million; and Citizen Corps Program, \$698,000.

Eighty percent of this grant must go to local jurisdictions. It will fund planning, training, equipment and exercises and other costs associated with enhancing the capability on a state and local level to prevent, respond to and recover from terrorist attacks.

Washington applied for this grant award Nov. 24. The grant will not be formally awarded until the Washington State Strategic Plan is approved by DHS. The state plan was submitted Dec. 30. After the grant award, the state will then have 60 days to obligate the counter-terrorism funds.

Urban Area Security grant

On Nov. 13, DHS announced Washington was eligible to apply for a DHS Fiscal Year 2004 (FY04) urban area security initiative (UASI) grant of \$16.5 million and an \$800,000 grant for Seattle/Sound Transit security.

The FY04 urban area security grant will augment Fiscal Year 2003 UASI II funding for planning, equipment, training, exercises, and administration/management costs



Gov. Gary Locke, center, signs the federal-state agreement in the State Emergency Operations Center at Camp Murray Nov. 11 to formally start the disaster recovery process for the October 2003 storms and floods. Other participants in the agreement signing were (l-r) John Pennington, director, Federal Emergency Management Agency Region 10; Anthony Russell, federal coordinating officer for the disaster; Diane Offord, state coordinating officer for the disaster; and Maj. Gen. Timothy J. Lowenberg, director, Washington Military Department. (FEMA Photo by Marvin Nauman)

Federal disaster area declared in 15 Washington counties for October 2003 storms and floods

Washington Emergency Management Division moved quickly to begin the disaster recovery effort following President Bush's declaration Nov. 7 of a 15-county disaster area for October storms and flooding.

Included in the disaster area for individual and households assistance were Chelan, Clallam, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Mason, Okanogan, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Thurston and Whatcom counties.

The President two weeks later declared seven counties eligible for public assistance programs for debris removal and public infrastructure damage.

"A major initiative in the Emergency Management Division over the past two years has been to upgrade the state's disaster recovery capability," said Diane Offord, state coordinating officer for the October storms and flood disaster.

"The October flooding and storms was a really like a mid-term exam for us to see what improvements we have made and what remains to be done to establish a more capable disaster recovery effort," she said.

Offord said the state needed several weeks to gear up to conduct a full-scale recovery effort after the Feb. 28, 2001, Nisqually Earthquake disaster. "Nisqually showed us that we needed to have more people and systems in place to more quickly start recovery operations, especially in the Individuals and Households Program."

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Federal disaster area declared in 15 Washington counties for October storms and floods

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In mid-2002, EMD reorganized its structure, changing the Operations Unit to the Response and Recovery Unit. The unit expanded to include both a Public Assistance Section and a Human Services Section.

The public assistance section, operating with as many as two dozen project staff, has worked since mid-2002 from a Recovery Field Office in Olympia to carry out the public assistance portion of the Nisqually Disaster. Members of the section, headed by supervisor Donna Voss, also are overseeing public assistance projects funded by the October 2003 storm and flooding disaster.

EMD's reorganization posed perhaps the greatest challenge to John Vollmer, supervisor of the Response and Recovery unit's human services section. His preparations for disaster recovery required the recruitment and training of a dozen or more reservists in a new and complicated federal computer system that handles individual and household disaster aid claims.

With the assistance of the Washington Military Department's human resources office and finance section, the human services personnel were identified and hired when the October storms and floods disaster field office opened Nov. 10, just three days after the President's disaster declaration.

EMD also helped out by shifting full time staff from other projects to the human services section to quickly begin work.

"The combination of these two efforts made the transition from response to recovery nearly seamless," said Vollmer.

Another significant boost to the disaster declaration process was the decision by FEMA and EMD to begin preliminary damage assessments before some local jurisdictions had even submitted damage reports, he said. "If it had not been for this effort, the disaster declaration may

have been delayed as much as two or more weeks."

The quick start to the individual and households program (IHP) enabled disaster recovery centers to open three days after the disaster field office and permitted disbursement of grants for other needs assistance to start within a week of the field office's opening.

Operations for the state's Human Services Recovery Team ended at the Disaster Field Office on Dec. 19 and were moved to Camp Murray on Dec. 22.

Team members who will continue working for the next six to nine months at EMD's headquarters are Frank Hickey, grant coordinating officer—other needs assistance (ONA); S. J. Barnsley, program assistant; Annette Boyatt, ONA case processing supervisor; Zina Manalo, ONA case processor; and Patty Dehnert, ONA case processor.

Disaster recovery as of Dec. 19

- 1,249 registrations were received through the FEMA toll free registration number
- 98 percent of FEMA damage inspections were completed.
- \$2,289,978 from the Individuals and Households Program has been disbursed to the victims.
- \$1,885,400 in Small Business Administration (SBA) loans were approved for 76 homeowners, renters and businesses. A total of 226 SBA loan applications were received.
- The Disaster Unemployment Assistance program (DUA) ended Dec. 18 for residents out of work due to the October storms and living or working in the 15 counties that were declared disaster areas. The program disbursed \$8,718 to 14 applicants.

Public Assistance

Seven western Washington counties were declared eligible by President Bush Nov. 20 for public assistance disaster aid. The counties were Clallam, Grays

Harbor, Jefferson, Mason, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom.

Disaster recovery staff held applicant briefings and kickoff meetings in the affected counties in late November and early December to help applicants prepare materials in time for the Dec. 19 application deadline.

Donna Voss, supervisor of EMD's public assistance program for the disaster, said she expects between 50 and 60 applicants to prepare public assistance project requests.

Gov. Locke's public assistance disaster request cited a preliminary statewide damage estimate of \$10.7 million.

Voss said applicants could include public agencies, tribes, and non-profit agencies. She anticipates that the first project applications will be completed in January. Project awards would not be made until later in 2004.

Under FEMA's Public Assistance program, federal funds to pay up to 75 percent of approved costs. The applicants and the state will pay equal shares of the remaining 25 percent of the project costs.

State awarded DHS grants

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for the designated Seattle urban area. The urban area jurisdictions consist of King, Pierce and Snohomish counties and the city of Seattle. The grant requires at least 80 percent of the funds to be allocated to the urban area jurisdictions. An assessment and strategy for the UASI II grant was submitted at the end of November. A spending plan for allocation of the UASI II funds was submitted to DHS on Dec. 30.

Transit funds are to be used for installation of physical barriers, thermal/infrared imagery, detection systems, integrated communication systems, and for prevention planning, training and exercises.

No federal disaster request for December windstorm

State and local officials determined the damages from a windstorm in early December were insufficient to qualify for federal disaster assistance.

The officials announced their decision Dec. 26 after an extensive survey of damaged areas in King and Pierce counties.

Strong winds and rain Dec. 2-5 knocked out power to more than 200,000 homes in the Central Puget Sound area. Some homes and businesses suffered significant damage and disruption, particularly in King and Pierce counties.

Since the windstorm, emergency management offices in Pierce and King had fielded hundreds of calls reporting damages, but most callers were covered by insurance. An assessment conducted last weekend by the King County Office of Emergency Management (OEM), Pierce County Emergency Management, Washington State Emergency Management and the Federal Emergency Management Agency did not yield enough damaged structures to qualify for federal disaster relief.

In lieu of federal assistance, windstorm victims who did not have insurance and are unable to obtain a loan to repair damages still have community resources that may be able to help:

The **Pierce County Dept. of Community Services Housing Program**, (253) 798-7038, may be able to provide repair services to address emergency health and safety issues in the home. Information is also available on the Internet at www.piercecountywa.org. Go to "Community Services" in the county directory and then choose "Housing Programs."

The **King County Housing Repair Program**, (206) 296-7640, or (800) 325-6165, ext. 7640, may be able to provide 0% interest loans and grants for housing repairs for low and

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A sandbag wall marked the front lines of the late October flood fight to save the town of Mount Vernon from the flood waters of the Skagit River. More than 2,000 volunteers helped build the sandbag wall. (EMD Photo by Chuck Hagerhjelm)

Home number transfers to wireless can impact 911 calls

Persons considering disconnecting their home wireline phone and transferring their number to their wireless phone should understand the current limitations of using wireless phones to call 9-1-1 to report emergencies, according to EMD's E9-1-1 Unit.

Under Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules that became effective on Nov. 24, persons may transfer their wireline telephone number to their wireless phone. This practice is called local number portability.

The decision to switch from wireline to wireless is not one to be made lightly or solely for economical reasons. A wireless call to 9-1-1 may not be as reliable as you have come to expect with your wireline phone.

In many areas across the state, a wireless 9-1-1 call cannot automatically display the exact location of the call to the 9-1-1 center. Should the distressed caller be unable to speak or does not know the area well enough to provide street directions or an address, help could be delayed or not arrive at all.

In time, technology may be able to provide the location of wireless 9-1-1 callers, but that technology is still being developed in the wireless industry.

Study recommends Orting area footbridge and tunnel

A feasibility study has recommended the construction of a footbridge over the Carbon River and a tunnel under State Highway 167 as the evacuation route for Orting School District students and staff in the event of a Mt. Rainier mudflow.

After crossing the Carbon River near the Orting sewer plant, the preferred route calls for construction of a 30-foot wide stairway that would take students and staff to safe locations about 120 feet above the Orting valley floor.

The 2003 Washington Legislature appropriated \$250,000 for the study and directed the Washington Military Department (WMD) to conduct it. WMD contracted with Pierce County Emergency Management Department to implement the study with the assistance of the Pierce County Public Works and Utilities Department. KPFF Consulting Engineers, Seattle, performed the feasibility study. Cost of the recommended project was pegged at \$12.7 million. The feasibility study will be submitted to the 2004 Legislature.

EMD Staff Awards and Assignments

Catherine Bartholomew accepted a promotion to senior program coordinator in the Enhanced 9-1-1 Unit Nov. 20. She has worked in the E911 program since September 2001, serving as a program assistant and program coordinator.

Jeff Parsons was named the new Infrastructure Logistician Program Manager on Nov. 25 in the analysis and plans section of the Mitigation, Analysis and Plans Unit. Parsons, who came to EMD in 1996, previously had served as a planner and as acting programs section manager in the unit.

Paul McNeil, who previously had served in project positions in EMD's Nisqually Disaster recovery program, was appointed Dec. 3 to the newly created position of assistant Emergency Operations Center manager. His assignment is a two-year project position.

Arel Solie was named Urban Area Security Initiative Program Manager on Dec. 3. The appointment is a two-year project position. Solie had worked in a temporary position in the homeland security section of the Preparedness Unit.

Robert Harper, EMD public information officer, received an outstanding achievement award in November for his coordination and preparation of the public information program in last May's Top Officials II exercise in Seattle.

Roger Hieb, manager of the Homeland Security Section in the Preparedness Unit, was presented an outstanding achievement award in November for his work to coordinate and prepare the state, local governments and participating federal departments for last May's Top Officials II exercise in Seattle.

Teresa Williams, a member of the first group of state emergency operations officers selected in 1994, transferred to a financial coordinator position in the Enhanced 9-1-1 Unit on Dec. 15. She came to EMD 1991 as a radiological technician and most recently served as a duty officer.

Camilla Meriwether, a civil engineer in the Disaster Recovery Office in Olympia, received her 10-year state service award in an Oct. 30 presentation.

Tony Raines became EMD's newest state emergency operations officer Dec. 22. He is retired from the U.S. Air Force.

Barbara Thurman wins IAEM Media Contest Awards

Barbara Thurman, public education coordinator in the Emergency Management Division, won four first place awards in the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) 2003 Media Awards Contest.

Media contest award winners were announced at IAEM's annual conference held Nov. 16-19 in Orlando, Fla. The contest was open to the emergency management community for projects in areas such as publications/newsletters, scrapbooks, and audio-visual entries.

Thurman received first place awards for the Disaster Preparedness Month media campaign packet and posters; Disaster Preparedness Handbook and Compact Disc; and the 2003 Shelter-in-Place video. She also received an honorable mention award for the 2003 public service announcement that addressed shelter-in-place actions.

Puget Sound gets first loudspeaker alert system

The Port of Port Townsend now features a new 800-decibel all-hazard broadcast alert system to warn marina residents and workers of tsunamis and other hazards.

The loudspeaker system, which is the first of its kind in Puget Sound, is mounted on a 40-pole and is powered by a rechargeable battery. Installed in late October, the system includes a blue flashing strobe on top as a visual alert.

Washington Emergency Management Division served as coordinator for the project, which was funded by an \$18,000 grant from the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program.

December windstorm

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moderate income homeowners living in the county outside Seattle.

Information is also available on the Internet at www.metrokc.gov/dchs/csd/Housing/Repair.htm.

The **Washington Faith-Based Disaster Recovery Network**, (877) 255-1155, may be able to provide services on a case-by-case basis.

Officials of Pierce and King counties praised the public for their cooperation in the damage assessment process and for carrying the appropriate hazard insurance.

The winds, set up by a strong east to west flow across the Cascade Mountains, were especially strong in eastern King and Pierce counties. Several areas reported gusts of more than 60 miles per hour. Weather observers said it was the strongest windstorm to strike western Washington since the Inauguration Day storm of 1993.



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The Washington Emergency Management Division, including the State Emergency Operations Center, is located in Building 20 on Camp Murray, located at exit 122 on Interstate 5 south of Tacoma, Washington.